

H.N. Gunes

ATTITUDES OF GAGAUZES AND ULUPAMIR KYRGYZES TOWARDS PREMARITAL SEX: A COMPARISON BASED ON ETHNICITY–RELIGION–TRADITION

A comparative analysis of attitudes of Gagauzes and Ulupamir Kyrgyzes, each acknowledged as constituents of the global Turkish culture, towards premarital sex was carried out in this study. Gagauzes are an autonomous Christian community, while Ulupamir Kyrgyzes are a Muslim community living in exile in territories of a different country. It was stipulated that their different religious affiliations would act as a discriminator with the assumption that both communities have much in common at the level of ethnicity, culture, and tradition. Both communities, on the other hand, are considered as sub-national communities whose identity-building processes are in progress. In identity-building processes, components such as religion, ethnicity, and tradition may be instrumentalized at different levels according to the existing socio-political conditions. The gender regime, which also includes attitudes towards premarital sex, is shaped according to the nature of this instrumental use as well. Therefore, 166 people – 115 women and 51 men – from the Gagauz community and 154 people – 76 women and 78 men – from the Ulupamir Kyrgyz community were met to measure the impact of the ethnicity, religion, and tradition elements on attitudes towards premarital sex associating with factors such as age, gender, income, and education. Findings indicate that, although attitudes of both communities towards premarital sex seem to have a conservative mean, the scores of Gagauzes are significantly higher compared to that of Ulupamir Kyrgyzes. By interpreting the findings, it has been concluded that the influence of the ethnicity and tradition factors are more evident in the attitudes of Gagauzes and the religion factor in the attitudes of Ulupamir Kyrgyzes.

Keywords: Gagauzes; Ulupamir Kyrgyzes; premarital sex; ethnicity; religion; tradition.

Introduction

This study aims to perform a comparative analysis of the attitudes of Gagauzes living in the Gagauz Autonomous Region of Moldova and Ulupamir Kyrgyzes living in the Erciş District of the Van province of Turkey towards premarital sex. The main reason for choosing these two communities living in different geographies for comparison is that, although both communities are considered to be components of Turkish culture, they are subject to different belief systems. Pan-Turkist policies that Turkish tribes living scattered in various parts of Central Asia, Asia Minor, and Europe are the bearers of historical Turkish Culture, and that all these communities form cooperation and share a common destiny [1] are still strong and widespread. Well, is this cultural genetics so dominant that it is capable of absorbing religious differences considering the theses and policies identified based on the evidence such as common linguistic features, shared customs, and migration maps based on their common movement points? In other words, is it possible to reunite in a folk spirit (*volkgeist*) that takes cultural genetics as a reference despite the differences in the level of faith?

As will be discussed in more detail below, both Gagauzes and Ulupamir Kyrgyzes speak dialects very similar to Turkish and most of their birth, wedding, and funeral ceremonies are also seen in Turkey and other Turkish communities. Both communities feel a close connection in both socio-cultural and political level with Turkey. Similarly, these communities attract the attention of the people of Turkey [2]. Therefore, I assume that the social perceptions with reference to Turkish culture will be similar in these communities. It would not be wrong to say that attitudes towards sex before marriage, which constitute the focal point of the study, are also included in this pre-acceptance.

Although Turkish culture, whose origins are based on the history of Central Asia, nourished from the shamanic

tradition, the historical Turkish civilization, in general, was included in the Islamic cultural environment by converting to Islam in the 8th century [3]. During the so-called Migration Period, it is also known that they chose Christianity in line with the socio-political processes involving some small tribes who disintegrated from the main body and display scattered settlements. Nevertheless, according to the Pan-Turkism approach, the tendency to consider these communities in Turkish culture is more dominant [4]. It is possible to say that, although religion has an important place, ethnicity and tradition prevail in the basic motivation of this approach. In this context, being a Christian is considered a second-degree deviation.

Religion, Ethnicity, Tradition: Classification of the Framework

A community may belong to a different belief system from the communities in the ethnic identity group to which it belongs. At this point, on what basis should the gender perception of that community, including the perspective of premarital sexuality, be evaluated? Ethnicity, religion, tradition, or modernity? Among these options, even if we place modernity in a separate category on the basis of a traditional–modern contrast, the first three elements contain a nested uncertainty in terms of a cause-and-effect relationship. For example, while Durkheim [5] argued that religion emerged when socially based rituals created common patterns, according to Schuon [6], religion is the ore derived from the tradition itself. However, debates are also under way where the meanings of the concepts of religion and tradition gain importance in terms of different belief systems. Accordingly, in Islam, the emphasis on religion stands out in that it is based on the Holy Quran, which is regarded as a divine text whose single letter has not changed; however, Christianity is intertwined with tradition due to the secularization process it went through [7. P. 168]. This

distinction does not offer a safe assessment option because, although the religion of Islam has not entered into a secularization process like the Western example of Christianity, it has revealed a wide variety of practical differences based on interpretation as a result of its relations at both social and political levels. Otherwise, we would not have been watching a Sectarian Conflict between Iran and Saudi Arabia [8] in the sub-dimension of Huntington's Clash of Civilizations [9]. Likewise, we would not be confronted with the knowledge in the Bible that a military aristocracy flourished from the private property of the land whose ownership was God's right, and the right to use was based on the principle of equality [10. P. 310–311]. At this point, as Marx states, in his German Ideology [11. P. 72], that religion and politics – which he considers the real causes of this era – are nothing but the forms of production relationships embraced by the civil society and that they are wrongly considered as the only active forces that determine practical activities of people. Adhering to this notion, one could move ahead as per the framework of established forms and consequences of this upside-down relationship. In this sense, Hobsbawm's [12] Invention of Tradition and Anderson's [13] Imaginary Communities thesis can lead us because we know that historical relations of production were able to make one of the phenomena of ethnicity, religion, and tradition more functional. The relationship of the Roman Empire with Christianity, Nazi Germany with the concept of Ari Race, fascist Japan with tradition created social motivation for the desire for absolute power. The relationship between men and women has vital importance at the basis of the collective spirit that is tried to be built through all three sources of motivation, and especially women play an important role. This is because women are often established as cultural symbols of the community and community borders, carriers of the community's honor, and intergenerational reproducers of community culture [14. P. 132–133].

Women should not be positively implicated in being reproducers of community culture, as this is a passive category subject to the notion of creating culture and civilization through men [15]. All monotheistic religions took the woman's fertility, namely her life-giving power, ideologically, and gave it to God and the man who was his representative on earth [16. P. 10]. These religions, on the other hand, labeled women literally as a reckless and cursed being to be kept under control based on the myth of Adam and Eve [17]. On the other hand, they kept the women in the system, providing that she was primarily a virgin, then a loyal wife, and ultimately a good mother, and commissioned them as a producer of community culture. Although the influence of religious institutions that provide the organization of all these gender roles in different periods and different societies has decreased or changed, maintaining the stability of these roles should require a social motivation that also instrumentalizes religious discourse. Nations, imaginary communities, which Anderson [13] claimed to have emerged as a result of the decline of religions and dynasties, the rise of capitalist publishing and the change in the perception of time, can be considered as the new form of this motivation. Indeed, on the way to the capitalist

nationalization process, the Medieval Catholic church significantly transferred its organizational function to the state. The modern nation-state, on the other hand, did not make significant expansions on women and their gender roles, but only reproduced the issue from a theocratic perspective to a technocratic framework (such as population planning, poverty laws, family policies). Moreover, in order to reduce financial responsibilities, such as the care of illegitimate babies, which was under the responsibility of the Church in the past centuries, the modern nation-state has changed the tradition by declaring it out of morality and virtue [18]. However, like Catholic Church offering the opportunity to be purified provided that it turns into a sinful Eve, the Virgin Mary, or Mary Magdalena, who is repentant and devoted to God; it will also be the modern nation-state that converts this uncanny being into the Holy Mother [19] provided that it fulfills its assigned duties.

Although bloody battles continued in the past; there seems to be a single point where nations, religions, and their traditions unite: woman and control over her. However, when expressed in this way, there is a risk that the main issue will be reduced to some form of misogyny, but we can see the tendency of men to be supervised by the same elements, albeit their level is quite different. Rules that are accepted as indicative of male control include rules about marriage and afterward. In this sense, it would not be wrong to say that the real interest of the will, which instrumentalizes religion, tradition, ethnicity, and nation, is the family institution, where it bears a vital responsibility for the preservation and maintenance of its existential conditions through reproduction. It is related to the fact that the family institution plays a central role in the social functionalist sociological approach that develops a conservatism relationship with the above three factors and focuses on order and harmony [20]. The construction of the family institution within a structure with boundaries and rules, just like the nation-state, systematized top-down value transfer and bottom-up reproduction. In this system, codes defining the requirements of marriage, sexuality, and reproduction will be placed, and these codes can be found in religion, ethnicity, or tradition according to the current character of sociality. So that, even modernity, which builds the cause of existence on its categorical contrast with the traditional, does not hesitate to appeal to each of these three, while encouraging mothers to raise labor force and military children that the nation-state needs; like the 3Ks of Nazi Germany: Kinder: Child, Küche: Kitchen, Kirche: Church [21. P. 119].

In the final analysis, it is possible to summarize my basic approach when evaluating attitudes towards premarital sex, which is the subject of this study, as follows: civil society dominating production relations builds patriarchy as a social control system, and patriarchy generates codes by making use of religion, ethnicity, and tradition both instrumentally and relationally. In this sense, the attitudes of Gagauzes and Ulupamir Kyrgyzes about premarital sexuality will be discussed in relation to virginity, the cultural code, and within the framework of religion, ethnicity, and tradition.

Marriage and Virginitly in Kyrgyz Society

Ulupamir Kyrgyzes comprise a community of around 2,000 inhabitants in Ulupamir village, Erciş District, Van, Turkey. In the early 20th century, Ulupamir Kyrgyzes, who lived a nomadic life on the plateaus of the Pamir located in a strategic location between the Soviet Union, Afghanistan, and China within the borders of East Turkistan, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, constantly moved (Ulupamir Kyrgyzes faced the obligation to re-migrate at the time of the final version of this article. The hydroelectric power plant, which was established exactly in their residential area, threatens the living space of Ulupamir Kyrgyzes) because of wars, unrest, and political pressures and, finally, migrated to Turkey when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan [22]. The Kyrgyz who shared shamanism, Zoroastrianism, and other pagan beliefs with other communities in the region of Siberia previously, are estimated to have adopted Islam from the 8th century onward [23].

It could be argued that Kyrgyzes adhere to an interpretation of Islam far from that of Arab culture within a common cultural circle with Turkic communities such as Kazakhs, Uzbeks, Turkmens, Azerbaijanis, and Tatars with whom they share the same language and religion [24]. On the other hand, it is known that Islamic practices are superficial among Kyrgyzes living in the northern and eastern regions, whereas Islamic motives are dominant in religious practices among Kyrgyzes in the southern and western regions [25]. The present religiosity in Ulupamir Kyrgyzes, who entered the southern group alongside their life experiences in the Pamir Mountains, has become more evident due to the impact of forced migrations. This tendency in Ulupamir Kyrgyzes is also evident in preferring Turkey despite being offered settlement possibilities in Alaska [26].

Islam and pre-Islamic belief systems in Kyrgyz society could be argued to have different effects in terms of examining concepts such as gender, women, virginity, and marriage. Generally, studies aimed at determining the place of women in pre-Islamic Turkish culture [27–30] commonly indicate that the value given to women is higher than in the Islamic period. While suggesting that Turks are both democrat and feminist because of the influence of shamanic culture, the Turk sociologist Gökalt [31] tries to materialize his claim with the women's rights of divorce, earning property, and patrimony. On the other hand, these examples do not prevent the formation of a strict understanding of morality and honor in Turkish culture. Eventually, the pre-Islamic Turkish culture has a patriarchal identity as well and severe punishments like burning or dismembering of the accused for acts of violating honor [32] is a manifestation of this strict patriarchal understanding. By contrast, the status of women in Islamic culture has been determined by precise lines of Islamic law. Even though Quran, which makes up the basis of this law, discusses females in an egalitarian and non-discriminatory manner, it takes an approach that nourishes patriarchal social gender hierarchy by placing them in a financially male-dependent and culturally obedient position [33]. For the moral principles of Kyrgyz society in the framework of gender,

it could be argued that it is a form of pre-Islamic patriarchal values that are further toughened by Islamic law. The concept of virginity is considered a very sensitive value in this form [34, 35]. Loss of virginity is a very serious problem in Kyrgyz culture and the veracity of how virginity is lost may remain a secondary concern against the seriousness of this issue. The most concrete example of this situation is the incidents of kidnapping girls. The phenomenon is ubiquitous in Kyrgyz society; it often ends up in marriage. Since the loss of virginity as a result of forced possession of a young girl during the kidnapping is irreversible, the only way to put this corollary into a moral framework is marriage [36–38]. Islam's influence might be dominant in this approach since the consent of two parties is sought for marriage in pre-Islamic culture and the kind of rapes seen in abduction incidents are stated to end up with death penalties in cases when the woman does not consent for marriage [39].

Marriage and Virginitly in Gagauz Society

Gagauzes are a Christian community living in the Gagauz Autonomous Region, located within the borders of the Republic of Moldova but also living in a scattered manner in many countries such as Ukraine, Bulgaria, Romania, Greece, and Russia. Around 63% of Gagauzes, who make up a large population of around 170 thousand people in the Gagauz Autonomous Region of 1,882 km² consisting of the capital city Komrat and districts of Çadır and Vulkanesh, live in rural areas [40. P. 35]. Besides widely speaking Russian and Moldavian, the middle-aged and elderly population tries using the Gagauz language, which is close to Turkish. The Gagauz society has been treated as a Turkic community in many studies in Turkish academic literature and has received particular attention beside other communities that are considered as consanguine in the foreign policy of the Republic of Turkey [41, 42]. However, the issue of ethnic origins of the Gagauz people is quite complicated.

As per the oldest examples from the sources seen in the late 19th century, it is possible to tell that the debates on the ethnic origin of the Gagauz people are gathered under two groups, of which one is of Turkish origin and the other is of non-Turkish origin. Those who advocate non-Turkish theses include historians such as Meşçerük, Gurgurov, and Svinin [43] who defend the theory that Gagauzes are Bulgarians who maintained their religion despite losing their language. However, under the theses of Turkish origin, the Gagauz people are the descendants of Seljuk Turks who came to Dobruca with the Seljuk Sultan, 2nd Izzeddin Keykavus, from Anatolia and the individuals like Balasçev [44] and Wittek [45] claim that the name of Gagauz comes from Keykavus [46]. Manof [47] and Kafesoğlu [41] maintain that there are two different versions of Gagauzes. They are either an extension of Turkish tribes such as Peçeneks and Kumans or come from a lineage consisting of a blend of these two with tribes of Oğuz. Today, interestingly, the Gagauz people living within the borders of Moldova claim to be of Turkish origin, while those living within the borders of Bulgaria claim to be of Bulgarian origin [48]. In this case,

since the main reference ought to be the Gagauz people living in the native country, the theses of Turkish origin must be considered more explanatory. Another point of reference is the Gagauz cultural assets that emerged in many anthropological and sociological studies of Gagauzes that show similar features to Turkic communities in Anatolia and Central Asia. This gives us a common point of action in terms of comparing Ulupamir Kyrgyzes and Gagauzes in a cultural study. Meanwhile, the fact that Gagauzes are Christian, unlike most Turkic communities, provides a particular focus to this comparison.

Statelessness, dispersion, and weak political structure of Gagauzes have also destabilized the relationship of this society with religion, ethnicity, and tradition. The Turkish identity in their relations with the Ottomans and the rise of the Orthodox faith in their contact with the Bulgarian language or Greek politics under the Bulgarian flag are related to this situation. However, nonlinear outcomes of these crosswise effects also take shape. For instance, Manof [47. P. 47] states that no one is able to convince the Gagauz people that what they do is wrong concerning their disobedience or even outright violation of Christianity. Although this is the result of their closeness to tradition than religion, it is related to their worship in Greek, Bulgarian, and Moldovan languages until the early 20th century and the lack of religious books in their languages [43]. At this point, belief structures have become eclectic, and this is reflected in practice as well. Gagauzes living in the region have their forenames from the Bible, and their last names are Gagauzian/Turkish and, instead of the term God, they use the Islamic terminology, Allah.

The structure of the Gagauz tradition entirely reflects the codes of the patriarchal regime. In the period until it came under the influence of the Soviet Union, the women's identity was structured by traditions and lived as subordinate to men; women could not even have their own passports and were deprived of all political rights [43]. Of general tendencies of women, who are fully dependent on traditional mother and wife roles, are not to reveal besides not complaining when they are subjected to violence, not to break into conversation in the environment where stranger men are around, and not to consider divorce as an option despite all kinds of difficulties [43]. However, this frame was largely broken with the rules of the Soviet regime, and the gender roles were transformed by granting various political rights to women and their inclusion in working life. Although the effects of these gains persist today, immediately after the dissolution of the Soviet regime, the Gagauz society instinctively returned to their traditions. Soon the gender roles that have changed under the influence of Soviet ideology will be affected by the conditions of the free market economy this time. At least one member of Gagauz families, who suffer from poverty and insecurity, has gone to European countries to work while also many women go to various countries, especially Turkey, as care-workers, maidservants, or sex workers [49, 50]. The fact that fathers who are left behind with their children must carry out the house chores has created a new break in traditional roles.

Despite the ever-changing conditions and flections in values, the influence of tradition on the gender regime of Gagauz society is evident. However, this tradition has become horrendous in the extent of uncertainty that the quest for religious, ethnic, and political identity has created. From the 1990s, when the Soviet regime collapsed, till the present day, an independent Gagauz is being shaped within the policy of establishing a national identity. Today, the middle-aged-plus women living in Gagauz society complain that the young generations are pulling away from tradition. Women from this generation, whom I met for a different study, emphasize the importance of traditional gender roles of women and occasionally accuse themselves of neglecting these roles, referring to the image of the "sinful woman" of Medieval Christianity [51]. On the other hand, the Gagauz woman has to explain the situation of her biotypes who engage in sex work, if necessary, to supply their family under the conditions that disregard the tradition [52, 53]. After centuries, today, the Gagauz people were able to acquire an autonomous position by breaking the dependency relationships, this time they are experiencing the agony of acquiring a new identity squeezed between the effort to create a national awareness with reference to tradition and the living conditions imposed by economic problems.

Methodology

This survey seeks to determine the views of the Gagauz community living in the Gagauz Autonomous Region of Moldova and the Ulupamir Kyrgyzes in the Van province of Turkey on premarital sex based on data obtained from a measurement tool applied.

Participants

A total of 166 Gagauzes, 115 women and 51 men, and 154 Ulupamir Kyrgyzes, 76 women and 78 men, who were randomly selected from the lower, middle, and upper socioeconomic levels living in the Gagauz Autonomous Region by applying simple random sampling, which is a method in which every subject in the population has the same chance of being selected, participated in the study. Herewith, the field research was carried out with the participation of 320 people in total. The distribution of participants is presented in Table 1 as per their nationality, age, gender, income, and educational levels.

Instrument

Premarital Sexual Permissiveness Scale (PSPS) consisting of 12 items developed by Karakurt [54] and a Personal Information Form containing four questions on demographic factors such as age, gender, income, and education level making up a measurement of 16 questions was employed in the study.

The participants indicated the extent of their agreement with the statements given in PSPS on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 shows a negative attitude, 3 indecision, and 5 a positive attitude.

According to the results of reliability analysis of PSPS, the mean of the 12-item scale was calculated as 27.2 with a standard deviation of 9.699. The overall mean and the overall variance of items were obtained as 2.267 (Min = 1.703, Max = 3.234) and 1.928 (Min = 1.498, Max = 2.594) respectively. The mean of the correlation between items was computed as 0.281 (Min = 0.002, Max = 0.827).

The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of the scale was found 0.823. This result shows evidence that the 12 items in the scale are highly reliable in that they represent a homogeneous whole. There was no evidence to cause a change in the Cronbach Alpha coefficient obtained when one or more of the items in the scale was removed and it was concluded that the scale is consistent in its entirety.

Table 1

Demographics of Research Participants

		Gagauz (%)	Kyrgyz (%)	Total (%)
Gender	Female	69.3	49.4	59.7
	Male	30.7	50.6	40.3
Age Group	25-35	43.4	68.2	55.3
	36-45	21.1	19.5	20.3
	46-54	23.5	9.7	16.9
	55 and above	12.0	2.6	7.5
Education Level	Primary School	7.8	28.6	17.8
	Secondary School	18.7	26.6	22.5
	High School	30.7	31.2	30.9
	University	38.6	13.0	26.3
	Graduate	4.2	.6	2.5
Income/per month (USD)	No Income	34.9	18.8	27.2
	0.1-150.0	34.3	3.9	19.7
	150.1-300.0	26.5	19.5	23.1
	300.1-450.0	4.2	45.5	24.1
	450.1 +	.0	12.3	5.9
Total		100.0	100.0	100.0

Procedure

In order to determine the Gagauz participants for the study, the Moldova Turkish Embassy and the Turkish Student Representative of Komrat State University were contacted, and the field research was carried out in August 2018 in person, with the help of the Turkish Student Representative as well as teachers who are appointed officially by the Republic of Turkey in the region and students of Gagauz origin receiving undergraduate education in Turkey.

In the sample of the Gagauz community, some obstacles arose in terms of balancing the number of men and women. In most of the households in the Gagauz community, at least 1 male went out of the region or country to work. For this reason, more women are encountered in the households visited for the interview. On the other hand, different towns in Gagauz Autonomous Region were visited for interviews and these visits could be made within working hours. For this reason, many men who were at work at that time could not be reached. As a result, the Gagauz sample consisted of 115 female and 51 male participants.

To contact the Ulupamir Kyrgyzes, who were to participate in the study, permission was firstly sought from the administrative authorities of Erciş District of the Van province. Then the village chief representing the Ulupamir Kyrgyz community was contacted under the guidance of faculty members working in Bitlis Eren University who previously had conducted studies with this community, and the field research was carried out in March 2019.

Data Analysis

PSPS includes items containing positive and negative statements. The contribution of positive aspects to the

scale score was obtained by reversing responses given to the items that contained negative expressions. This way, large scores for the scale show a positive attitude towards the scale, while small scores show a negative attitude. The amount of monthly income obtained in local currency is grouped by calculating its USD equivalent to ensure its comparability. Groups with an insufficient number of observations in variables of age, education level, and monthly income were combined. Number (frequency) and percentage distributions of the responses provided for the scale items were examined, and an outlier analysis was also performed which yielded no extreme points of concern. The distribution was examined according to independent variables, where the skewness and kurtosis values were found falling in the range of ± 1 and there was a close to normal distribution. Moreover, it was checked whether it was distributed with a common variance according to independent variables, and it was decided to use the alternative provision for the test used in cases where there was no common variance. The Student t-test was examined when the assumption of common variance of PSPS scores was satisfied in two-group factor comparisons, while the Welch test was examined for variables with no common variance. One-way ANOVA was used in multi-group factor comparison of PSPS scores and F statistics in distributions with a common variance, as well as Welch test results were examined in heteroscedastic cases. However, two-way ANOVA was used for interaction comparisons of PSPS scores under two factors along with Bonferroni correction for distributions sharing a common variance in all pair comparisons, while Games-Hovell results were examined in cases with no common variance. Cohen's d was computed for pair group factors and Partial Eta Square values for one-way and two-way ANOVAs for effect sizes.

Findings and interpretations

The study's findings were obtained through combinations that measured the relationships between ethnicity, gender, age, income, and education factors and the PSPS scores. The findings are presented together with their graphics that stand out in terms of evaluation.

When the PSPS scores were examined according to the nationality of those involved in the study, the mean score of Gagauzes (2.566 ± 0.7919) was observed to be

higher than the mean score of Ulupamir Kyrgyzes (1.944 ± 0.6953). On the other hand, it could be argued that there is no gender difference in attitudes regardless of nationality ($F(1,316) = 2.663$; $p = 0.104$; $\eta^2 = 0.008$). According to the two-way ANOVA result, the interaction variable (nationality*gender) was not significant and the PSPS scores were parallel to nationality and gender, ($F(1, 316) = 0.552$; $p = 0.458$; $\eta^2 = 0.002$). The PSPS scores of men and women in both communities are seen in Figure 1.

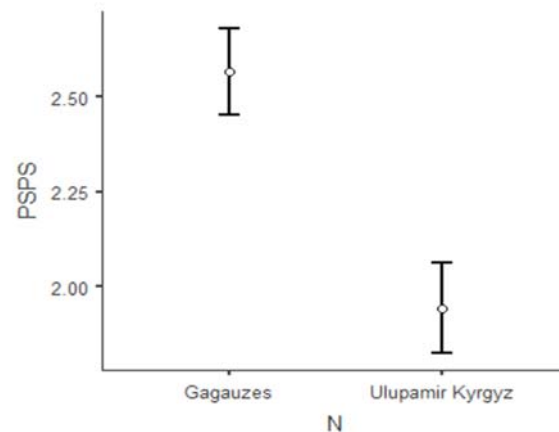


Fig. 1. PSPS Scores by Nationality

When the PSPS scores were examined along with nationality and education variables, score distribution according to nationality and education level shares a common variance (Levene $F(7,312) = 0.416$; $p = 0.892$).

Figure 2 indicates a significant difference in the PSPS score according to nationality ($F(1,312) = 15.708$; $p = 0.0001$; $\eta^2 = 0.091$). In the meantime, there is a different mean according to education levels regardless of nationality ($F(3,312) = 6.042$; $p = 0.008$; $\eta^2 = 0.037$). Besides, the interaction of nationality and education level was significant ($F(3,312) = 9.580$; $p = 0.0001$; $\eta^2 = 0.057$). In this interactive model, it could be argued that scores significantly differ in some levels of education according to nationality. According to the F tests results, the PSPS scores were significantly different at each level of education in high school ($F(1,312) = 5.386$; $p = 0.017$; $\eta^2 = 0.017$) and University + graduate levels ($F(1,312) = 41.970$; $p = 0.0001$; $\eta^2 = 0.119$) in terms of nationality. The degree of effect of this difference is higher at the University + graduate level as indicated by Partial ETA Square.

Considering the analysis of the difference yielded by the F test related to pair-wise comparisons in high school and University + Graduate levels according to nationalities, the PSPS scores of Gagauz people significantly differed according to the levels of their education ($F(3,312) = 11.076$; $p = 0.0001$; $\eta^2 = 0.096$). However, the PSPS scores of Kyrgyz people did not significantly differ according to the levels of

their education ($F(3,312) = 2.308$; $p = 0.077$; $\eta^2 = 0.022$).

Moreover, the PSPS score did not have a common variance according to nationality, amount of income, and interaction model (Levene $F(7, 312) = 2.954$; $p = 0.005$). Therefore, the ANOVA test was performed separately. The PSPS scores separately analyzed by nationality and income distributions were found to have no common variance (Gagauz; Levene $F(3, 162) = 3.706$; $p = 0.013$; and Kyrgyz; Levene $F(3,150) = 2.273$; $p = 0.073$). ANOVA results under unequal variance were analyzed by Welch test and Post Hoc comparisons by Games-Hovell test. According to the Welch test results applied separately for each nationality, the PSPS score of Gagauzes may differ according to income status (Welch $(3, 31.933) = 8.154$; $p = 0.0001$). However, there was no statistical evidence that the PSPS score of Kyrgyz people differed according to income status (Welch $(3, 20.637) = 1.362$; $p = 0.282$). Figure 3 illustrates that as a result of pair-wise comparisons of income levels, Gagauzes with incomes more than 300USD were found to have significantly higher PSPS scores than those with lower income levels. Accordingly, considering the order of the largest difference, the 0.9002 point difference between those with incomes between 0.1 – 150.0 USD and those with incomes more than 300USD is significant ($p = 0.03$). The 0.7880 point difference between those having no income and those having more than 300USD income is significant ($p = 0.07$). Besides, the 0.7849 point difference between those having 150.1-300.0 USD

income and those having more than 300USD income is significant ($p = 0.07$).

Further, nationality, age, and nationality*age interaction distributions of the PSPS score yielded a homoscedastic distribution (Levene $F(5, 314) = 1.339$; $p = 0.247$). According to Multivariate ANOVA test, the interaction nationality*age is not significant ($F(2, 314) = 1.976$; $p = 0.159$; $\eta^2 = 0.012$). On the other hand, it could be argued that, regardless of nationality, there is a difference in scores in terms of age groups ($F(2, 314) = 5.267$; $p = 0.006$; $\eta^2 = 0.032$). However, the power of

this difference is much lower than the difference caused by nationality (Nationality; $\eta^2 = 0.122$).

The score of Gagauzes is significantly higher than that of Kyrgyzes ($p < 0.05$) in each age group. The scores of Gagauzes in the 25–35 age group could be stated to differ significantly by 0.519 points from those aged 46 and above ($p = 0.0001$). The striking point here (as shown in the graph) is that when the difference is examined between [25–35] and [36–45] age groups, the point difference in Gagauzes (0.288) is in favor the young people, while in Kyrgyzes this is against the young people (-0.060).

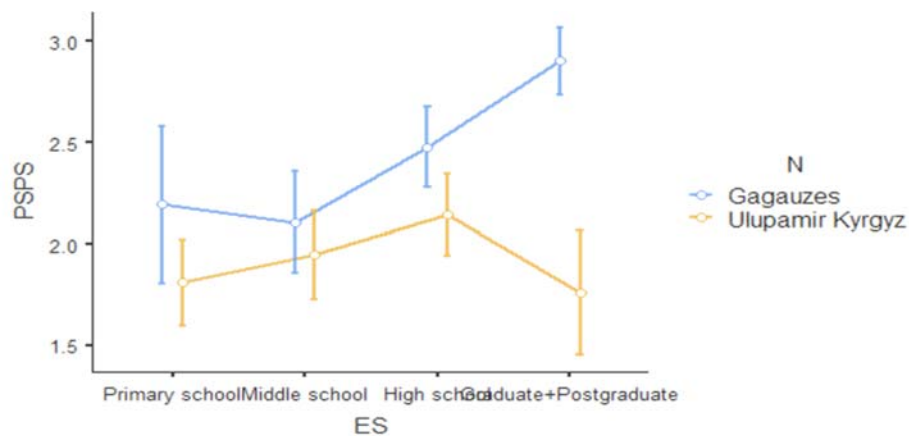


Fig. 2. PSPS Scores by Nationalities and Levels of Education

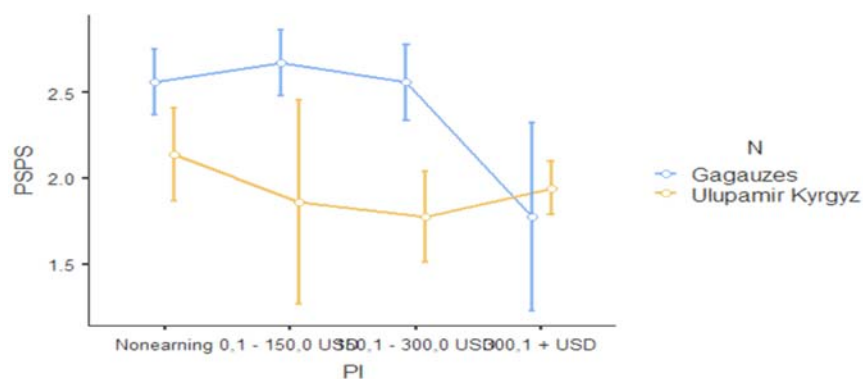


Fig. 3. PSPS Scores by Nationality and Income

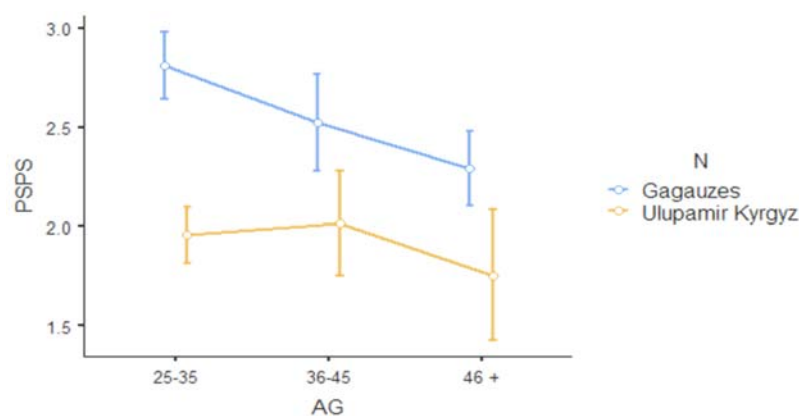


Fig. 4. PSPS Scores by Nationality and Age

Conclusion

The study compared the attitudes of the Gagauz community living in the Gagauz Autonomous Region in Moldova and Ulupamir Kyrgyzes living in Turkey towards premarital sex. The reason why these communities were chosen as sample is that they are both considered part of Turkish culture but affiliated to different religions. In this sense, the cultural foundations were considered as a point of movement and the belief systems as a factor of dissociation. In addition, Turkish culture was taken as a point of movement only, as this cultural raw material containing ethnic references was not regarded as a fixed data by an essentialist approach. Instead, the phenomenon of identity was approached as a flexible and transitive construct far from the essentialist reality that social actors creatively construct using cognitive, normative, aesthetic, and symbolic resources based on a constructivist approach [55. P. 149]. In this context, a theoretical framework true to Hobsbawm's [12] concepts of "The Invention of Tradition" and Anderson's [13] "Imagined Communities" was utilized within the same approach.

On the other hand, both Gagauzes and Ulupamir Kyrgyzes were considered as sub-national communities because of their autonomous or nomadic lives. Sub-national communities are defined as being between tribe and nation and related to ethnicity. Some ethnic groups use the concepts of "race" or "blood", while others use measures of cultural competence [56. P. 43–44]. No matter upon which component they choose to base their ethnic construct, sub-national communities reflect the most dynamic, complicated, and even inconsistent examples of the identity-building process. In such communities, returns to religion, ethnicity, or tradition, depending on political conditions, occur in parallel with strict rules of intellectual and moral behavior that, according to Said [57], defy the freedoms associated with relatively liberal philosophies such as multiculturalism and hybridism.

The Gagauzes and Ulupamir Kyrgyzes constituting the sample of the study are the living, stunning, and concrete examples of a dynamic process of identity-building. Gagauzes are a community who have changed their religion, language, and cultural codes in the course of history and are still looking for a way today. Due to years of political oppression, the Ulupamir Kyrgyzes continue living in exile in Turkey's geography, where they feel closely connected from a religious, ethnical, and traditional point of view, but are still struggling for identity between the Turks with whom they want to establish a bond. and the Kurds, who are geographically surrounding them, do not see them as friends in the political conflict persisting in the country.

Of course, nationality, race, class, religion, gender and language, identity and ethnicity are often interlinked when forming identity and the elements being dominant through historical terms of formation of a particular ethnic identity are different from one another [58]. However, considering the traumas they have experienced, the change in these two communities will be quick and tough. The important point here, as Smith [59. P. 49] points out, is the extent to which traumatic events falsify or alter the basic myths,

symbols, memory, and value patterns that also bind the generations of the community to one another while also distinguish them from the 'outsiders' concerning which of the lines constituting the boundaries of 'cultural signs' will make cultural differentiation stable.

Gender perception is both a component and a consequence of the identity-building process. Observing relationship that gender perception builds with other components, especially in the ongoing identity-building process, can provide more fundamental and fresher data. So we wanted to see this relationship through attitudes towards premarital sex in these communities, where the identity-building dynamic is ongoing. I added age and gender factors to the scale (PSPS) in that they are directly related to tradition plus added the income and education factors in that they are more closely related to modernity. In this context, I considered six variables in the analysis I was to do using the scale including ethnicity, religion, age, gender, income, and education.

With the Premarital Sexual Permissiveness Scale (PSPS) consisting of expressions such as "I am against premarital sex", "I think it's immoral to have sex before marriage", "I do not find it appropriate for people to have sexual intercourse before marriage", participants' attitudes towards sexual intercourse before marriage was measured. Analysis of the PSPS score according to the nationality of those involved in the study indicated that, although both communities seem to approach premarital sex negatively, the mean score of Gagauzes was observed to be higher than that of Kyrgyzes. Based on this finding, it is possible to say that the meaning of virginity that Kyrgyzes have attached to the concept of virginity is stronger. The negative attitude of Kyrgyzes towards premarital sex and even more the negative attitudes of women towards losing their virginity in this way are related to the narrow cultural environment where they live. During their escape from the Soviet regime, Ulupamir Kyrgyzes were not in touch with ethnic and religious differences but established relationships with the Turkish and Kurdish communities who also share similar cultural codes with them in the geography where they live today. On the other hand, for years the Gagauz people have been in touch with cultural circles such as the Soviet regime, where gender codes were more flexible and women's freedom was an important value as well as the Moldovan, Romanian, and Russian communities, where sexuality is less restricted than that of Islamic culture. A study that examined premarital sexual behaviors of women in Moldova, Albania, and Ukraine reported that women living in Moldova are less affected by religious factors [60]. However, the noteworthy conservative position in the attitudes of Gagauzes towards premarital sex, although relatively lower than that of the Kyrgyz community, does not go unnoticed. Therefore, addressing the mean conservative attitude of both communities towards premarital sex and the relatively more conservative attitudes of Ulupamir Kyrgyzes is essential.

Both communities seek to ensure social unity on identity-belongingness basis. Therefore, their orientations towards cultural raw material or their endeavor to create cultural raw material seem inevitable. At this point, it could be argued that the comebacks are mainly towards

religion in Ulupamir Kyrgyzes and tradition in Gagauzes. After the downfall of the Soviet regime, the Gagauz society is striving to establish its autonomous structure through the nationalization movement [40]. The efforts to purify the Gagauz language, in particular, are a reflection of this tendency and are mostly welcomed amongst the middle-aged-plus population. The fact that demographically the population over the middle age are living in the countryside is influential in gaining importance in the tradition factor. For instance, Mikhail Chacir's efforts to localize the Gagauz language by translating the religious texts into Gagauz in the early 20th century nurtured this language by religious capital [61] and particularly reclined the language consciousness of this stratum into the tradition. From the pre-Soviet Gagauz tradition standpoint, virginity is approached as a very strict phenomenon. Of other examples of Turkish culture, the wedding night rituals and enforcements exist in Gagauz tradition, too [43, 62]. Although they seem to have diminished to a symbolic level with the "red raki" custom in today's marriages [47, 62], they remain important in public memory. Emphasis on tradition in identity acquisition process entails the recall of customs, especially when the elderly population draws the boundaries of *I* and *other*. The fact that the most valid answers that can be provided about the reasons why they demand existing as an autonomous community in the Republic of Moldova lies in the traditions that make them, different and it is the idea that makes this tendency even stronger from a psycho-social perspective. At this point, the dysfunctional elements of the tradition may somehow be loaded with functions. However, the Gagauz society, on the one hand, is busy with the invention of tradition, while, on the other hand, it must tackle the challenges of being the poorest country in Europe [63, P. 2]. Cultural tensions between the experiences of individuals who travel to various countries to work, study, or even participate in the sex trade to break up the chain of poverty and the middle-aged-plus rural population who seek to preserve the identity via tradition make it difficult to maintain the balance. As the findings indicate, the income and education factors that would pave the way for transformation against the tradition may create differences in attitudes towards premarital sex. This attitude evolves into a distinctly positive one, especially in the undergraduate and graduate level of education which requires walking away from the rural life. This inclination is in line with the results of a similar study conducted in Bulgaria, which is one of the countries where the Gagauz people are living [64].

On the other hand, negative attitudes are distinctively prominent in individuals with a high level of income in both communities. Although the mean score of Gagauzes is slightly higher than that of Ulupamir Kyrgyzes, it falls into a similar level with the score of 46+ age group Ulupamir Kyrgyzes. In terms of production relations, an inverse relationship between the increase in welfare and traditional attitude was expected in this study. However, the findings are showing the opposite. Considering that the whole Ulupamir Kyrgyz population shares a common rural life, the attitudinal homogeneity regardless of income differences is a comprehensible fact, though our

Gagauz sample includes a mix of those living in rural and urban areas. At this point, when the income-attitude relationship in the Gagauz sample is considered together with the age-attitude relationship, combined senility and welfare could be the categories indicating the most negative attitude. The relation of elderly and rural populations with tradition was elaborated previously. It could be claimed that the traditional attitudes of individuals comprising the majority of this stratum, isolated from public life, have stiffened because of not knowing languages other than the Gagauz language. Yet the validity of this claim should be tested by determining the rural-urban distributions of income groups.

Ulupamir Kyrgyzes are living based on a *mechanical solidarity* with a motivation to protect the community spirit in the nomadic/exile life that starts in the Pamir Plateau and continues in the territory of Turkey. Since their out of community relationships are very limited, the union strategy is more dominant for their similarities. Alternatively, the foundation of this union, unlike the Gagauzes, is based on a religious ground rather than on ethnicity-tradition relationship. Firstly, the Ulupamir Kyrgyzes have a common nation and homeland, albeit they are far away, but there is also a resentment-induced distance between them and the home country Kyrgyzes. Urmanbetova [65, P. 104] supports this situation in her study quoting participant statements such as "brides from Kyrgyzstan do not pray" and "there is no religion in Kyrgyzstan, it is developing just now". Being of Kyrgyz or Turkish origin is not an element that could be used as a discriminator within the geography and social structure where they live. Contrarily, being Kyrgyz/Turkish mostly has an integrative function in the relationship to be established. On the other hand, this identity may be a problem in terms of relationships with the immediate surroundings. Ulupamir Kyrgyzes are in tense interaction with nearby Kurdish communities, as they carry out ranger activities [66]. At this point, it might be their Muslim identity that brings them together on common ground with both the Turks as the majority and also with the Kurds in the immediate vicinity. Studies [24, 67, 68] show that Muslim religious identity is more dominant in Kyrgyz culture. In this sense, gender perceptions and attitudes towards premarital sex and virginity are expected to be stricter based on the Islamic tradition. Besides, the anxiety of "we will be dispersed if we separate" within this community influences the stable and rigid pursuance of this perception. Division of labor, which has failed to turn into dominant specialization within this community, is capable of absorbing the impact of age, gender, income, and education factors. There are no conditions for diversifying ownership relations in this new habitat, where the animal breeding activity, which could be accepted as the basic production relations, has declined instead of developing (the proportion of those engaged in animal breeding alone is 13.3% [69]). Since education is capable of increasing intellectual development rather than being a factor that affects production relationships, one could argue that individuals who leave the community for undergraduate and graduate education may not be capable of transforming community values when they return. The results revealed at this point

indicate that as the level of education increases, the attitude towards premarital sex surprisingly turns into positive in the undergraduate and graduate levels. This could be interpreted as individuals who leave the community for education use the attitudes they have acquired within the community at the point of reactivity rather than integration where they go. Put differently, they might have used the out of community education as a differentiating element of identity in the new environment on condition that they consider temporary and utilize it in their return, and this way, they may have stiffened the respective attitude evermore.

The overall findings indicate that attitudes towards premarital sex are more positive in favor of the Gagauz society with a conservative mean. Despite the fact that the age factor had no significant impact on this attitude, there was also a positive tableau in favor of Gagauzes at the level of gender, income, and education. To summarize the analysis based on my theoretical framework once again, the

formation of unity and identity in these communities, both of which carry sub-national characteristics, occurs in such a way that encompasses gender perception. Unity and identity anxiety, which are the primary sensitivity in both, develop this perception by leaning on the patriarchal regime. Both tradition and religion are the factors that nurture the patriarchal regime and the Gagauz society takes the former as a reference while Ulupamir Kyrgyzes take the latter. On the other hand, the Gagauz society is more open to change in terms of its potential for transformation in gender perception in general and premarital sex perception in particular or its attitude towards virginity owing to its autonomous experience or relationships stemming from its geopolitical position. Ulupamir Kyrgyzes, on the other hand, seem to be more desirous in maintaining their attitudes, as they base their identity anxiety on the unity factor. Ultimately, for both communities, ethnicity–religion–tradition will continue to determine these attitudes in varying ways in terms of their cyclical advantages.

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